

SC035339

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a local authority. The home can accommodate seven children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

One of the seven places is in an adjoining annexe and is available to young people who have lived at the home for a period, to help them gain skills in living semi-independently in preparation to leave care.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 November 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 October 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/10/2017	Full	Good
20/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/12/2016	Full	Good
16/03/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(viii))	31/12/2018
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40(4)(C))	31/12/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that the registered person only accepts placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where full consideration has been given to the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. In particular, do not admit a child to the home where the impact risk assessment indicates that the placement of the child is likely to have a negative impact on children already in placement or the child's needs cannot be met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Ensure that the staffing meet the needs of young people and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child's perspective. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, young people are settled and happy living in the home. There had previously been a period of instability because of the needs of the young people previously placed. However, the manager worked closely with placing social workers to ensure that appropriate placements were identified, and the young people were helped to move on in a positive and planned way.

Medication is managed effectively, and all staff are first aid trained. Young people's healthcare needs are identified, and the staff advocate for them and work in partnership with healthcare providers. This enables the young people to receive the correct physical, emotional and mental healthcare support to meet their individual needs. As a result, some young people's emotional well-being has significantly improved.

Staff understand the importance of education and promote this positively. They provide effective challenge when young people are sent home from school without being formally excluded, as well as attending return to school meetings. However, one young person is not receiving education from school as agreed and this is having an impact on their educational attainment.

Young people understand and know their rights. They have access to independent advocates and know how to complain. The manager ensures that all complaints are fully investigated, and responds to the young person directly to make sure that they are aware of the outcome of their complaint. They also have regular individual key-working sessions to help them to learn, understand and reflect on any issues which may be having an impact on them. They are involved in staff recruitment by way of developing questions for applicants and are updating the young person's guide for any new person moving in. One young person said, 'We understand what kind of worries or questions other young people may have so are making the new guide easy to follow and to help them understand about what to expect living here.' Further consultation is through monthly young people's meetings where they can raise their views and opinions.

Staff support young people to stay in touch with their family or other significant people. Where arrangements are such that meetings must be supervised, with agreement from placing social workers, the manager and staff arrange these either in the community or the home to enable these to be as informal and relaxed as possible.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff work in partnership with external agencies which are tasked with protecting and safeguarding young people. As a result, young people are safeguarded well. Detailed risk assessments are in place identifying known and potential risks. Overall, the risks young people previously presented with are reducing. Staff follow these risk assessments and make sure that these are kept under review, thereby remaining current and providing an accurate oversight.

There have been a high number of missing from care episodes. This is due to the staff being required to report young people missing as soon as they are unable to contact them. That said, the staff make every attempt to contact and locate the young people. This includes going to known addresses or collecting the young people from wherever they are. They follow the agreed protocols, and other agencies charged with safeguarding young people speak highly of the staff response to young people missing from home to secure their safe return home.

Staff work with the young people to educate them in keeping themselves safe. This includes the dangers of alcohol, smoking and substance misuse. The staff work closely with specialist services to make sure that their own knowledge reflects current issues. This, in turn, ensures that young people have access to the correct information.

The staff maintain excellent links with the Phoenix team, which visits the home regularly to provide support to young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation. The sharing of local intelligence enables staff to be aware of areas within the community that may pose a risk for young people and this is reflected in the home's area report. These measures further contribute to maintaining young people's safety.

Sanctions and physical intervention are used appropriately to safeguard young people. There have been two significant assaults on staff by young people. However, staff are fully trained and follow all techniques to minimise risk to the young people and themselves. That said, overall behaviours of young people have improved since living at the home.

Recruitment procedures in place are in line with safer recruitment practice. This helps to guard against adults who are unsuitable to work with children working in the home. This includes checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service and written references from previous employers, which are verbally verified.

Health and safety checks are in place and monitored by the manager. This means that the young people live in a home that is safe, comfortable and adheres to relevant health and safety legislation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager is suitably experienced and qualified, having been a deputy manager at the home prior to becoming the registered manager in April 2016. She is supported in her role by a qualified deputy manager and an experienced staff team. The clear majority of staff hold a relevant qualification. The manager has high aspirations for the young people and this is reflected throughout the staff team.

The home has had an increase in admissions and discharges since the last inspection. This has been due, in part, to the need for additional placements following the closure of a contracted home within the borough, resulting in young people requiring placements. The manager completed very detailed impact assessments. However, on occasions her

recommendations were overturned by senior managers because of the need for placements in an emergency. This had an impact on all the young people and, as a result, there was a period of instability and challenging behaviours presented. The manager and placing authority recognise that this is not conducive to positive outcomes for the young people. As a result, some young people were supported to move on to more appropriate settings to meet their needs.

There have been some staff shortages in the last few weeks because of some permanent staff being off sick following assaults by young people. However, wherever possible, the manager, deputy manager and staff have covered staff shortfalls by working additional hours. In addition, agency staff who are known to the young people have helped to cover shortfalls in the rota. This provides young people with continuity of care and support. However, the manager recognises that this is not a long-term solution and recruitment is currently ongoing. Young people are involved in this recruitment and selection process in order to contribute their wishes and views to the employment of staff in the home.

Staff have formal supervision in line with the agreed policy. In addition, they can have informal meetings with the manager or deputy manager to discuss any concerns or practice issues. Staff say that this is beneficial and helps them reflect on their role. Mandatory training is in place and within timescales, and further specific training is held in relation to the needs of young people placed. Monthly staff meetings provide further opportunities for practice discussions, and daily handovers are comprehensive. These measures ensure that staff are fully aware of the needs of young people and work cohesively as a team to support them.

The manager undertakes regular monitoring of the service and this is further supported by independent monitoring. The bi-annual monitoring by the manager informs the further development of the service.

Overall, the manager keeps all relevant people informed of significant incidents. However, there has been an oversight on two occasions when Ofsted, the regulator, was not informed of an allegation made by a young person. This does not enable the regulator to have full oversight of the home. That said, the manager ensured that all other procedures were followed, ensuring the safety of the young person involved.

Young people's records provide clear accounts of their daily lives. They have the opportunity to comment on them and are fully involved in decisions about their care and future.

The home is a large home that is warm and welcoming. Young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their own bedrooms and contribute their views on the overall decor of the home. For example, the bathrooms have recently been refurbished and the young people contributed their wishes to the colour schemes and styling of these areas.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035339

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UT

Responsible individual: Patsy Burrows

Registered manager: Dianne Chesters

Inspector

Sarah Oldham, social care inspector

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